

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Long Island's immigrant population has grown dramatically over the past three decades. In recent years, Central America and Asia have been the leading sources of migrants to Long Island, but immigrants continue to arrive from regions all over the world. Immigrants have emerged as the major source of demographic growth on Long Island: excluding new immigrants, Long Island would have lost, rather than gained, people since 1980. Immigrants are found throughout Long Island, both in cities and villages with well-established immigrant communities and dispersed across the numerous area townships.

As workers, consumers, and taxpayers, immigrants—documented as well as undocumented—make important contributions to the Long Island economy. Immigrant Long Islanders added \$10.6 billion to total Long Island output and generated an estimated 82,000 jobs in 2006 as a result of their consumer spending. Their overrepresentation among “prime working age” people further suggests that immigrants are an economically productive force on Long Island. In addition, Long Island immigrants contribute positively to local government budgets. This study finds that immigrants contribute \$2,305 more per resident to local revenues than they receive in local expenditures on education, health care, and corrections. The magnitude of the figure strongly suggests that both documented and undocumented immigrants are net contributors to the Long Island economy.

The importance of immigrant Long Islanders to the regional economy will only increase as this population continues to grow in the years ahead. This study documents the extraordinary recent changes in the region's immigrant population and describes its key demographic characteristics. It then quantifies the immigrant population's contributions to production and employment. The report concludes by analyzing the immigrant contribution to local government revenues and costs.



*Among the study's major findings:*

#### POPULATION

- The Long Island immigrant population more than doubled since 1980 to just over 465,000 residents, accounting for more than 16 percent of the general population. The rate of increase was far greater than that for the Long Island population as a whole (7 percent).
- More than 85 percent of immigrants arriving on Long Island prior to 1980 are today U.S. citizens.
- More than one-half of all immigrants arriving on Long Island since the year 2000 are Latin American. This compares to less than 17 percent of those who had arrived in 1980 or earlier.
- Tiny El Salvador contributes by far the most immigrants to Long Island. As of the year 2000, only Italy accounted for at least half as many as El Salvador's total of 44,067.
- Asians have the highest proportion of immigrants among the major ethnic groups. Almost 70 percent of Long Island's Asians are foreign born as of 2000, according to the U.S. Census.
- The Long Island immigrant population tends to concentrate in certain townships. In the year 2000, 56 percent of Nassau County's immigrants lived in Hempstead Town, while nearly three-quarters of Suffolk's immigrants lived either in Babylon, Brookhaven, or Islip.
- Hempstead, Freeport, and Elmont in Nassau County and Brentwood in Suffolk County are by far the four largest immigrant communities on Long Island, with over 13 percent of Long Island's immigrants among them.
- Over 46 percent of Long Island's immigrants are in the "prime working age" category of 18 to 44, compared to less than one third of non-immigrants. Immigrants are also relatively more plentiful in the other category of working age adults, 45 to 64 year-olds.
- An overwhelming majority of Long Island's immigrants report that they speak English "well" or "very well": nearly 60 percent of Spanish-speaking immigrants, 85% of non-Spanish-speaking Europeans, 75% of Asians or Pacific Islanders, and over 95% from other groups.
- Long Island immigrants are more likely to be married than their native counterparts. Nearly two-thirds are married, compared to 54.5 percent of the general population.

#### ECONOMIC IMPACT

- After subtracting income and payroll taxes, savings, remittances, and property taxes, Long Island immigrants had an estimated \$7.5 billion in buying power in 2006. Their total spending produced an economic impact of \$10.6 billion.
- Immigrants in 2006 contributed an estimated \$2.13 billion in taxes and other government revenues (directly and indirectly), while costing Nassau and Suffolk local governments (counties, towns/cities, villages, and school districts) about \$1.06 billion for K-12 education (\$772 million), health care (\$244 million), and corrections (\$44 million). This yields a net benefit to Long Island of about \$1.07 billion, or \$2,305 per immigrant resident.
- All immigrant groups are net contributors, although the extent varies significantly. Asian immigrants contributed a net benefit of \$3,249 per head in 2006, non-Hispanic white immigrants contributed \$4,059, Hispanic immigrants \$842, and black immigrants \$789.